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ABSTRACT

In preparation for the possible establishment of a Pharmacy Technician program, the Eastern Iowa Community College District convened a Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) workshop in December 1989, involving a panel of eight pharmacy technicians (PT's). Panelists helped to develop a DACUM chart, graphically describing the occupation in terms of specific tasks that workers must perform. To validate the entry-level skills defined through the DACUM workshop, a survey was conducted of 333 pharmacy-related businesses in Iowa and the Illinois Quad Cities area, identified through a previous survey as employers of PT's. The survey listed specific job skills, grouped into the following categories: basic skills (11 skills); operating computers (11 skills); filling orders (21 skills); chemo procedures (11 skills); filling outpatient prescriptions (16 skills); maintaining inventory (9 skills); recordkeeping (3 skills); and professionalism (4 skills). Respondents were asked to identify which skills entry-level PT's were expected to perform and to rate the importance of each skill for the entry-level PT. Study findings, based on a 55% response rate (N=183), included the following: (1) 42.1% of the respondents represented pharmacies in retail stores, 22.4% hospital pharmacies, and 15.3% stand-alone pharmacies; (2) the Chemo Procedures category was most frequently cited as containing non-entry-level tasks; (3) most skills identified as entry-level were also considered important; and (4) respondents placed a strong emphasis on communication skills and filing and typing skills. The survey instrument is included. (PAA)

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**PHARMACY TECHNICIAN
COMPETENCY VALIDATION
FOR THE
EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT**

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 **EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
DISTRICT OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND PLANNING
MARCH 1990**

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JC930283

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN COMPETENCY VALIDATION
FOR THE
EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

I. INTRODUCTION

This survey was conducted to validate the competencies defined for entry-level pharmacy technicians through the Pharmacy Technician DACUM workshop held in December 1989. DACUM, an acronym for Developing A Curriculum, is a process that analyzes an occupation systematically. The analysis is performed by a panel of experts from the occupation under consideration, in this case pharmacy technicians. Using a modified brainstorming method, the panel members participate in a two-day workshop under the direction of a qualified facilitator. The result of the process is a DACUM chart which graphically describes an occupation in terms of specific tasks that workers must perform.

The Pharmacy Technician DACUM workshop consisted of eight pharmacy technician panel members. These pharmacy technicians represented seven area hospitals and one private pharmacy which dealt primarily with nursing homes. Pharmacy technicians from the retail sector were not available for representation at the workshop.

II. THE STUDY

Target Population. A total of 333 businesses from the state of Iowa and Illinois Quad Cities area were identified for survey distribution. These businesses were respondents to the initial Pharmacy Technician Labor Market Assessment and indicated in that survey they employed pharmacy technicians.

Data Collection, Tabulation and Analysis. The survey was mailed on February 9, 1990 to 333 businesses in the state of Iowa. A cover letter and return envelope accompanied the survey. A second copy of the survey was mailed on February 28, 1990, to those who did not respond before the stated deadline. A total of 183 surveys were returned; this represents 55% of the total population polled. Of the 183 surveys returned, all were considered valid for the purposes of this assessment. The survey instrument can be found in Appendix A.

All surveys were tabulated and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Survey Design

The survey instrument requested information on the following:

1. The skills the employer expects an entry-level pharmacy technician to perform.
2. The degree of importance of each specific skill for the entry-level pharmacy technician.

III. RESULTS

Type of Organization. The respondents were asked to indicate which type of organization best described their facility. More than forty percent (42.1%) indicated they were pharmacies in retail stores, 22.4% were hospital pharmacies and 15.3% of the respondents were from stand-alone pharmacies. For complete results see Table 1.

TABLE 1
Type of Organization

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Pharmacy in retail store	77	42.1
Hospital	41	22.4
Stand-alone pharmacy	28	15.3
Pharmacy in clinic	19	10.4
Other (Please specify)	12	6.6
Home health care provider	2	1.1
Nursing home	1	.5
Mail order	1	.5
No Response	2	1.1
Total	183	100

Entry-level skills. The respondents were asked to indicate the skills they expect an entry-level pharmacy technician to perform and the degree of importance for each specific skill. The complete results are shown on Table 2.

TABLE 2
Entry-level Skills

	Percent indicating this is an entry-level task	Percent who indicated task to be Extremely Important, Very Important, or Important.
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BASIC SKILLS

1.	Identify drug classifications (i.e. generic & brand names).	62.5	72.4
2.	Explain the basic functions of drugs.	26.3	29.0
3.	Interpret medical terminology.	56.8	67.3

	Percent indicating this is an entry-level task	Percent who indicated task to be Extremely Important, Very Important, or Important.
4. Perform pharmacy calculations (i.e. algebra/math skills).	64.2	63.0
5. Recognize and interpret basic chemistry symbols.	40.5	41.4
6. Use apothecary language and measures.	61.4	66.9
7. Demonstrate proper use of reference materials.	56.3	58.8
8. Be familiar with current state and federal laws.	58.6	61.7
9. Write legibly.	98.3	95.3
10. Be able to type.	91.5	91.9
11. Communicate effectively.	100	98.9

OPERATE COMPUTER

1. Use medical terminology (i.e. apothecary system).	66.1	68.6
2. Apply computer terminology.	57.9	68.4
3. Use operating system.	64.0	71.6
4. Operate keyboard (i.e. accuracy).	83.7	92.5
5. Input/output information (i.e. orders, drug interactions).	49.4	67.1
6. Follow specific recommendations.	84.0	91.1
7. Generate medication profile.	63.7	77.4
8. Enter charges and credits (for accuracy).	75.3	90.4
9. Prepare reports (i.e. STATs, billing).	60.9	74.0

		Percent indicating this is an entry-level task	Percent who indicated task to be Extremely Important, Very Important, or Important.
10.	Do periodic backup of system.	46.7	67.2
11.	Maintain equipment (i.e. computer, printers, etc.).	40.4	51.9

FILL ORDERS

1.	Read and transcribe the order (recognize the route of medication).	72.1	84.9
2.	Communicate with hospital floors (i.e. verification).	54.0	68.5
3.	Prioritize orders and meet deadlines (i.e. STATs, etc.)	69.4	84.0
4.	Perform calculations (use calculator).	78.0	82.3
5.	Enter/read into computer.	75.1	84.9
6.	Generate a label.	74.6	84.8
7.	Follow handling procedures for specific orders (i.e.: unit dose).	74.1	86.8
8.	Memorize the physical layout of the pharmacy (i.e. tablets/liquids).	83.2	87.1
9.	Reconstitute drugs (i.e. use balance).	36.3	49.6
10.	Double check drug against order (triple check IV).	70.3	86.0
11.	Fill the order.	67.3	78.6
12.	Communicate with other hospitals and agencies if necessary.	56.5	69.0
13.	Complete necessary paperwork.	81.5	85.4
14.	Communicate with pharmacist.	95.4	98.8

	Percent indicating this is an entry-level task	Percent who indicated task to be Extremely Important, Very Important, or Important.
15. Deliver order (after being checked).	76.2	86.3
16. File the paperwork.	87.9	91.1
17. Maintain equipment.	62.2	65.8
18. Answer the phone and record message correctly.	91.4	96.4
19. Follow through on orders.	93.1	96.5
20. Manage time effectively (i.e. organizational skills).	98.9	97.7
21. Recognize the limitations of your job.	96.0	96.5

CHEMO PROCEDURES

1. Prioritize order and meet deadlines (i.e. STATs).	51.4	83.0
2. Follow aseptic/sterility procedures.	43.5	80.7
3. Differentiate type of injection.	32.8	66.2
4. Determine characteristics of drug.	22.2	49.3
5. Perform calculations.	33.8	59.5
6. Follow specific chemo procedures.	26.9	61.5
7. Print labels.	47.8	83.9
8. Prepare IV (i.e. TPN -- total parenteral nutrition).	19.4	60.7
9. Log IV.	30.4	72.3
10. Select proper storage of IV after being checked by pharmacist.	27.9	70.6

Percent indicating this is an entry-level task	Percent who indicated task to be Extremely Important, Very Important, or Important.
--	--

FILL OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTIONS

11.	Deliver IV.	42.9	78.9
1.	Communicate with customer (i.e. greet).	93.9	96.8
2.	Gather customer information (i.e. allergies, form of payment).	87.2	92.7
3.	Read and transcribe prescription.	64.8	84.4
4.	Locate medication (i.e. availability).	77.0	92.1
5.	Communicate with customers/pharmacist.	95.1	98.1
6.	Perform calculations.	59.5	69.1
7.	Enter/type labels.	75.0	87.3
8.	Fill orders.	64.6	82.8
9.	Determine correct pricing.	50.9	79.5
10.	Complete necessary paperwork (i.e. insurance forms).	70.7	90.7
11.	Have prescription checked by pharmacist.	90.9	98.7
12.	Deliver order and counsel customer (i.e. Orally repeat medication directions).	48.1	68.9
13.	Operate cash register.	73.8	95.7
14.	File the paperwork.	84.1	94.8
15.	Maintain equipment.	54.3	74.1
16.	Recognize the limitations of your job.	91.5	96.1

Percent indicating this is an entry-level task	Percent who indicated task to be Extremely Important, Very Important, or Important.
--	--

MAINTAIN INVENTORY

1. Memorize physical layout of pharmacy.	81.1	91.0
2. Use correct drug classification system.	64.9	77.9
3. Order and return drugs (i.e. discharge patients, outdated drugs).	63.7	82.7
4. Follow narcotic drug inventory procedures.	59.6	82.4
5. Supply and maintain other areas of the hospital (i.e. floorstock, crash carts, other departments).	46.4	78.1
6. Check for outdated drugs (i.e. monthly).	79.4	85.5
7. Check for recall drugs.	71.3	78.1
8. Communicate with other hospitals and agencies if necessary.	56.8	75.6
9. Communicate with sales representatives.	34.7	36.8

RECORDKEEPING

1. File and type.	88.0	95.7
2. Log information to comply with state regulations (i.e. joint commission).	66.3	89.3
3. Produce charges and reports.	69.8	87.4

PROFESSIONALISM

1. Read technical publications/literature.	44.1	53.6
2. Attend workshops.	53.5	65.2
3. Prepare for and take certification test.	44.0	63.6
4. Maintain registration (i.e. Illinois).	43.0	75.3

Concluding Remarks

The following skills were not considered to be entry-level by the majority of the respondents.

The major category of Chemo Procedures was most frequently cited as containing non-entry-level tasks. This would seem to indicate that Chemo Procedures is not an area of knowledge necessary for an entry-level pharmacy technician.

Not Entry-Level Skills

BASIC SKILLS

Explain the basic function of drugs.
Recognize and interpret basic chemistry symbols.

OPERATE COMPUTER

Input/output information (i.e. orders, drug interactions).
Do periodic backup of system.
Maintain equipment (i.e. computer, printers, etc.).

FILL ORDERS

Reconstitute drugs (i.e. use balance).

CHEMO PROCEDURES

Follow aseptic/sterility procedures.
Differentiate type of injection.
Determine characteristics of drug.
Perform calculations.
Follow Specific chemo procedures.
Print labels.
Prepare IV (i.e. TPN -- total parenteral nutrition).
Log IV.
Select proper storage of IV after being checked by pharmacist.
Deliver IV.

FILL OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTIONS

Deliver order and counsel customer (i.e. orally repeat medication directions).

MAINTAIN INVENTORY

Supply and maintain other areas of the hospital (i.e. floorstock, crash carts, other departments).
Communicate with sales representatives.

PROFESSIONALISM

Read technical publications/literature.
Prepare for ant take certification test.
Maintain registration (i.e. Illinois).

Most skills identified as entry-level were indicated by the respondents as having a high degree of importance. Results indicate a strong emphasis on communication skills and filing and typing skills. Specific entry level skills which were highlighted by 90% or more of the respondents as important, very important or extremely important include:

Important Entry-Level Skills

BASIC SKILLS

- Be able to type.
- Communicate effectively.

OPERATE COMPUTER

- Operate keyboard (i.e. accuracy).
- Follow specific recommendations.
- Enter charges and credits (for accuracy).

FILL ORDERS

- Communicate with pharmacist.
- File the paperwork.
- Answer the phone and record message correctly.
- Follow through on orders.
- Manage time effectively (i.e. organizational skills).
- Recognize the limitations of your job.

FILL OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTIONS

- Communicate with customer (i.e. greet).
- Gather customer information (i.e. allergies, form of payment).
- Locate medication (i.e. availability).
- Communicate with customers/pharmacist.
- Complete necessary paperwork (i.e. insurance forms).
- Have prescription checked by pharmacist.
- Operate cash register.
- File the paperwork.
- Recognize the limitations of your job.

MAINTAIN INVENTORY

- Memorize physical layout of pharmacy.

RECORDKEEPING

- File and type.

APPENDIX A



EASTERN IOWA COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

306 West River Drive • Davenport, Iowa • 52801-1221 • (319) 322-5015

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN VALIDATION SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to assist the Eastern Iowa Community College District in validating the skills performed by a pharmacy technician at your facility. Your responses will help provide direction to future state-wide programming efforts. The names of firms and businesses replying will not be released. We appreciate the time you will take to complete this survey.

The following is a list of tasks/skills performed by pharmacy technicians. Please indicate if your facility expects an entry-level pharmacy technician to perform each skill listed below. Rate each skill according to its importance for an entry-level technician. Circle the answer which best corresponds with your response.

		Entry Level		Order of Importance to New Employee					
		1. Yes	2. No	1. Extremely Important	2. Very Important	3. Important	4. Some Importance	5. Not Important	6. Not Used
I - IV									
V	BASIC SKILLS								
(1-2)	1. Identify drug classifications (i.e. generic & brand names).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(3-4)	2. Explain the basic functions of drugs.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(5-6)	3. Interpret medical terminology.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(7-8)	4. Perform pharmacy calculations (i.e. algebra/math skills).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(9-10)	5. Recognize and interpret basic chemistry symbols.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(11-12)	6. Use apothecary language and measures.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(13-14)	7. Demonstrate proper use of reference materials.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(15-16)	8. Be familiar with current state and federal laws.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(17-18)	9. Write legibly.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(19-20)	10. Be able to type.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(21-22)	11. Communicate effectively.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
	OPERATE COMPUTER								
(23-24)	1. Use medical terminology (i.e. apothecary system).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(25-26)	2. Apply computer terminology.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(27-28)	3. Use operating system.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(29-30)	4. Operate keyboard (i.e. accuracy).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(31-32)	5. Input/output information (i.e. orders, drug interactions).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(33-34)	6. Follow specific recommendations.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Entry Level		Order of Importance to New Employee					
		1. Yes	2. No	1. Extremely Important	2. Very Important	3. Important	4. Some Importance	5. Not Important	6. Not Used
(35-36)	7. Generate medication profile.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(37-38)	8. Enter charges and credits (for accuracy).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(39-40)	9. Prepare reports (i.e. STATs, billing).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(41-42)	10. Do periodic backup of system.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(43-44)	11. Maintain equipment (i.e. computer, printers, etc.).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6

FILL ORDERS

(45-46)	1. Read and transcribe the order (recognize the route of medication).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(47-48)	2. Communicate with hospital floors (i.e. verification).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(49-50)	3. Prioritize orders and meet deadlines (i.e. STATs, etc.)	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(51-52)	4. Perform calculations (use calculator).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(53-54)	5. Enter/read into computer.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(55-56)	6. Generate a label.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(57-58)	7. Follow handling procedures for specific orders (i.e.: unit dose).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(59-60)	8. Memorize the physical layout of the pharmacy (i.e. tablets/liquids).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(61-62)	9. Reconstitute drugs (i.e. use balance).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(63-64)	10. Double check drug against order (triple check IV).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(65-66)	11. Fill the order.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(67-68)	12. Communicate with other hospitals and agencies if necessary.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(69-70)	13. Complete necessary paperwork.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
VI (1-2)	14. Communicate with pharmacist.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(3-4)	15. Deliver order (after being checked).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(5-6)	16. File the paperwork.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(7-8)	17. Maintain equipment.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(9-10)	18. Answer the phone and record message correctly.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(11-12)	19. Follow through on orders.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(13-14)	20. Manage time effectively (i.e. organizational skills).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(15-16)	21. Recognize the limitations of your job.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Entry Level		Order of Importance to New Employee					
		1. Yes	2. No	1. Extremely Important	2. Very Important	3. Important	4. Some Importance	5. Not Important	6. Not Used
CHEMO PROCEDURES									
(17-18)	1. Prioritize order and meet deadlines (i.e. STATs).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(19-20)	2. Follow aseptic/sterility procedures.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(21-22)	3. Differentiate type of injection.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(23-24)	4. Determine characteristics of drug.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(25-26)	5. Perform calculations.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(27-28)	6. Follow specific chemo procedures.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(29-30)	7. Print labels.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(31-32)	8. Prepare IV (i.e. TPN -- total parenteral nutrition).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(33-34)	9. Log IV.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(35-36)	10. Select proper storage of IV after being checked by pharmacist.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(37-38)	11. Deliver IV.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
FILL OUTPATIENT PRESCRIPTIONS									
(39-40)	1. Communicate with customer (i.e. greet).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(41-42)	2. Gather customer information (i.e. allergies, form of payment).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(43-44)	3. Read and transcribe prescription.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(45-46)	4. Locate medication (i.e. availability).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(47-48)	5. Communicate with customers/pharmacist.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(49-50)	6. Perform calculations.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(51-52)	7. Enter/type labels.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(53-54)	8. Fill orders.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(55-56)	9. Determine correct pricing.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(57-58)	10. Complete necessary paperwork (i.e. insurance forms).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(59-60)	11. Have prescription checked by pharmacist.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(61-62)	12. Deliver order and counsel customer (i.e. orally repeat medication directions).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(63-64)	13. Operate cash register.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(65-66)	14. File the paperwork.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(67-68)	15. Maintain equipment.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6
(69-70)	16. Recognize the limitations of your job.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	6

		Entry Level		Order of Importance to New Employee					
		1. Yes	2. No	1. Extremely Important	2. Very Important	3. Important	4. Some Importance	5. Not Important	6. Not Used
VII	<u>MAINTAIN INVENTORY</u>								
(1-2)	1. Memorize physical layout of pharmacy.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(3-4)	2. Use correct drug classification system.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(5-6)	3. Order and return drugs (i.e. discharge patients, outdated drugs).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(7-8)	4. Follow narcotic drug inventory procedures.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(9-10)	5. Supply and maintain other areas of the hospital (i.e. floorstock, crash carts, other departments).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(11-12)	6. Check for outdated drugs (i.e. monthly).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(13-14)	7. Check for recall drugs.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(15-16)	8. Communicate with other hospitals and agencies if necessary.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(17-18)	9. Communicate with sales representatives.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
<u>RECORDKEEPING</u>									
(19-20)	1. File and type.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(21-22)	2. Log information to comply with state regulations (i.e. joint commission).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(23-24)	3. Produce charges and reports.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
<u>PROFESSIONALISM</u>									
(25-26)	1. Read technical publications/literature.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(27-28)	2. Attend workshops.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(29-30)	3. Prepare for and take certification test.	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(31-32)	4. Maintain registration (i.e. Illinois).	Yes	No	1	2	3	4	5	
(33)	Which of the following would best describe your organization? (Select one)								
	1. Hospital 2. Pharmacy in retail store 3. Stand-alone pharmacy 4. Nursing home 5. Mail order 6. Home health care provider 7. Pharmacy in clinic 8. Other (Please specify)								